

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food Safety Inspection Service

TECHNICAL SERVICE CENTER

Organizational Assessment



From Challenge to Opportunity: Creating Our Future Together

November 2001
Final Report

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Executive Summary

The Technical Service Center (TSC) was established in 1997. In February 2001, the TSC Director, Dr. Paul Thompson, initiated an effort to reassess the roles, functions, and organizational structure of the TSC. The purpose of the effort was to provide recommendations to improve its efficiency and effectiveness in meeting both current and future needs of all of its customers. The reassessment was intended to build on what has been learned over the past four years that the TSC has been in existence. A self-assessment work group was convened. Data was gathered from TSC Division Directors, Branch Chiefs, and staff, and from key customers, including District personnel, senior executives, State Directors, and industry representatives. Individual interview, focus group, e-mail survey, and phone interview methods were used to gather the data. In September 2001, Organization Development Systems, Inc. (O.D. Systems) was hired to validate the findings of the TSC reassessment. O.D. Systems conducted focus groups with the TSC self-assessment work group, District personnel in Beltsville and Atlanta, senior leadership, and internal customers. Interviews were also conducted with TSC and the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) leadership.

After the data were reviewed and analyzed, it became apparent that the TSC is regarded as an essential component of FSIS and that everyone wants the TSC to succeed. The data also indicated that the TSC's mission is still valid and important. Although the TSC was created to facilitate the Pathogen Reduction/Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (PR/HACCP) implementation, the role of providing technical guidance and assistance is necessary and should continue. The question then becomes, how does the TSC create an environment of consistent, accurate service from the best and the brightest technical experts and be concurrently responsive to both internal and external forces, nationally and internationally while anticipating future needs and requirements?

This report was jointly written by the TSC self-assessment work group and O.D. Systems. The report identifies current issues facing the TSC and provides recommendations and solutions for implementation to address those issues. The report also includes information on the history of the TSC and the FSIS culture change in order to set the context for the depth and breadth of accomplishments during the first four years of TSC's existence. The recommendations made are:

1. Clarify the role of the TSC as part of the Agency's corporate group and articulate the connection among the TSC, headquarters, field operations, and policy.
2. Strengthen the TSC's scientific capability to ensure that it is an anticipatory, leading edge technical resource for the Agency and its customers.
3. Gain cultural acceptance of the TSC in the Agency through improving trust among customers by creating a welcoming and encouraging customer service culture that provides consistent, top notch service.
4. Streamline the internal organizational structure of the TSC to accurately reflect the new FSIS culture; effectively integrate positions and functions; establish effective communication

mechanisms; strengthen leadership; and create employee development activities that recognize and value employees.

Background

Culture Change

With the implementation of the Pathogen Reduction/Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (PR/HACCP), FSIS inspectors began verify entire process instead of just inspecting an end product. This was based on the premise that if the process is an effective, well-implemented one, it should yield the desired results. This change in work dictated a significant culture change for the industry and for inspectors. In FSIS, inspectors went from an observe/react culture to one that is preventative. In today's environment, inspectors must anticipate as well as observe. They must ask themselves, "What are the potential results of what we have observed?" They must also react to the potential impact of what is observed. In addition to focusing on an end product, they must be aware of how all aspects of the food production system work and how they interact to ensure that safe food is a result of the system. They have had no previous experience working in such an environment. A whole new model of inspection was developed to fit with these changes. The model was based on a systems approach.

This shift also affected the nature of FSIS regulations. Prior to the HACCP rule, many of the regulations were prescriptive in nature (e.g., to meet regulatory standards a plant must cook a roast to specified time/temperature). Whether or not an establishment was meeting regulatory requirements was straightforward. Inspectors and plant operators could refer to specific numbers in the regulations. This former command and control environment was not flexible and it did not incorporate advances of ongoing scientific research. A purpose of the PR/HACCP regulation was to allow industry to innovate and develop alternate methods to meet regulatory standards and take advantage of breakthroughs in scientific research. Prescriptive standards were replaced with performance standards. These standards provide industry with a "target" to meet. This target was set using scientific and practical standards. This created an environment allowing considerable discretion in meeting regulatory standards and in determining whether those standards were met.

Prior to HACCP implementation, when field personnel had a technical question, they contacted a specialist in the Regional Office. The Regional specialist was the expert who made decisions for inspectors. Specialists did not provide options to staff, because the regulations were prescriptive. With HACCP implementation, instead of having inspectors tell plant owners and operators what to do, plant owners became responsible for developing, testing, and implementing plans to address food safety hazards. It was recognized that in order for this new system to work, it was best for decision making to take place on the front line. The new system required a great deal more critical thinking and judgment than the former system required.

A Resource Center is Established

The TSC was established in 1997 as a result of the Agency's reorganization to better align itself for implementation of the PR/HACCP regulation. The Agency closed a number of field offices

and consolidated its technical expertise into one location – the TSC. This consolidation was considered essential to ensuring easy access to timely, accurate, and consistent information and advice throughout HACCP implementation.

The TSC serves as the Agency's center for technical assistance, advice, and guidance regarding the implementation of national policies, programs, systems, and procedures including implementation of the farm-to-table food safety strategy within a HACCP framework. The TSC also assists in the implementation of strategies and serves as the feedback mechanism related to changes and refinements in existing systems and procedures. The TSC serves as a liaison and acts as a conduit to exchange information and provides guidance to a variety of groups. These groups include: FSIS inspection personnel and their supervisors, District Managers, other groups within the Agency, plant owners and operators, trade group representatives, consumer groups, state inspection officials, officials from other government agencies, foreign government officials, and any other group or individual who has questions about issues related to the regulation of meat, poultry, or egg products. The TSC does not provide a forum for resolving disputes between inspection personnel and plant management, nor does it rule on appeals. The role of the TSC is to provide all parties with the standards and other technical information needed to understand, implement, apply, and enforce regulatory requirements.

The TSC does not make decisions for field personnel who have questions. The role of the TSC is to provide options and information to inspection personnel. The TSC ensures that field personnel have the best information available to assist them in making decisions. This is a significant culture change for field personnel, and for TSC staff, many who were former Regional specialists. Some field personnel expect the TSC to make decisions. Some are uncomfortable with having options presented. Others are uncomfortable with the shift in the nature of rulemaking that uses performance standards instead of prescriptive rules. Some are not really sure how to ask questions, and sometimes don't know what the questions should be. Due to the nature of its work, the TSC must be on the cutting edge of the culture change. In performing its role of providing technical advice and assistance to the field, the TSC reinforces the culture change.

The mission of the TSC is to provide prompt and consistent service to our customers by:

- Providing technical advice and guidance;
- Correlating the execution of inspection procedures and requirements;
- Leading the implementation of new and modified inspection programs and procedures;
- Reviewing domestic and State inspection operations; and assessing the adequacy of foreign inspection systems.
- Developing and delivering training and educational activities anywhere, anytime, and in whatever form best fits the needs of employees and supervisors.

Reassessment

Purpose

The purpose of the TSC's self-assessment effort was to reassess the roles and functions of the TSC and provide recommendations to improve its efficiency and effectiveness in terms of meeting both current and future needs of its internal and external customers.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in conducting the reassessment:

- The TSC will continue to exist at its current location in Omaha, NE.
- The TSC will not experience a significant increase or decrease in funding or staffing beyond what is anticipated for FY 2002.
- The TSC will continue to serve the same broad customer base.
- The TSC functions will continue to include providing scientific, technical, and regulatory advice and guidance, correlating the execution of inspection procedures and requirements, leading the implementation of new and modified inspection programs and procedures, and reviewing inspection operations.

For purposes of this study, the reassessment of the Human Resource Development (HRD) Division was treated differently. HRD's activities were under consideration as part of a separate study by the Training and Education Committee, and it was felt that to consider HRD as part of this effort would be duplicative.

Study Process and Methods

In order to achieve this purpose, the following process was used.

- Communicate the need for the study.
- Develop questions for the study based on a model for organizational assessment.
- Collect data from within the TSC and from TSC customers.
- Analyze the data.
- Identify areas for improvement, define the major functions of the TSC, and propose a structure consistent with those functions.
- Engage a contractor to validate the study findings and co-create the assessment report.

Data was collected through individual interviews, e-mail surveys, and group interviews from FSIS Executives Thomas Billy, Maggie Glavin, Ron Hicks, Mark Mina, Phil Derfler, Kaye Wachsmuth; Field Operations Executives; TSC Division Directors; TSC Branch Chiefs; TSC Staff Members; District Offices including District Managers and Field Supervisors; State Directors and Industry Representatives.

Questions asked included:

- A. What is the TSC mission?
- B. What is your vision for the TSC future?
- C. What key roles/functions should the TSC fulfill?
- D. What are your needs/expectations?
- E. What are the strengths/areas for improvement?
- F. What are your concerns about the TSC?
- G. What are your recommendations?

The 1997 TSC Work Group Report was utilized during this study. In particular, recommendations from that study that were not implemented were identified and considered for their usefulness and application. One such recommendation that resurfaced during this reassessment was the development of an enforcement liaison function. The purpose of this function would be to provide technical advice and assistance regarding meat, poultry, and egg regulations to field personnel considering or involved in taking enforcement action. The report's recommendations for organizational structure of the TSC were also considered. Some of those that were thought to be "futuristic" in 1997 are now deemed feasible and potentially desirable.

Suggested Areas for Improvement

After the data was collected and analyzed, the following areas for improvement were identified in the reassessment:

- TSC staff development
- Communication (internal/external)
- Closer ties with OPHS/OPPDE
- Stronger support for District Offices

The reassessment results showed that all of the TSC functions should be maintained. However, with the HACCP implementation completed, the function of correlation has become more important. The Self-Assessment Work Group recommended streamlining the TSC structure to:

1. Effectively integrate positions/functions
2. Establish effective communication mechanisms
3. Align with major TSC functions
4. Reflect changes in FSIS focus

Validation

O.D. Systems conducted a validation of the TSC reassessment. They were charged with answering the following questions:

1. Are the self-assessment methods/conclusions valid?
2. Should additional information be considered?
3. How should the study recommendations be implemented?

The validation process began with a review of self-assessment documents and results as well as other Agency documents and strategic plan. Consultants visited the TSC in Omaha and conducted interviews with TSC Directors and Branch Chiefs and the Self- Assessment Work Group. Interviews were also conducted with FSIS executive Ron Hicks and OFO executives Mark Mina and Bill Smith. A focus group was conducted with other FSIS senior executives. Focus groups were also conducted with the Beltsville District and the Atlanta District Offices.

Questions used in the validation process included:

1. Given the mission of the TSC, on a scale of 1-5, where are we now?
2. What needs to be done to hit a 5? Who needs to do it?
3. Discuss a time when you interacted with the TSC and had a positive experience. What were the circumstances? Who was involved? What made it effective?
4. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the effectiveness of communication with TSC?
5. The top three challenges identified in the TSC self-assessment are:
6. generalization vs. specialization
7. accurate, timely, and consistent answers
8. correlation (internal and external)
To what extent is this list accurate? What challenges would you add?
9. How does the work of TSC help to support the FSIS mission?
10. What do you hope is accomplished as a result of this organizational assessment?
11. No matter how much TSC changes, what one value should continue into the future?
12. What is your primary wish for TSC's future?
13. Out of all of the things we've discussed today, what do you think is the most important solution for implementation?

Challenges

The reassessment activities and the validation interviews and focus groups surfaced a number of challenges facing the TSC. The TSC has become a victim of its own success. The dedication and commitment to providing the best, most accurate, and most consistent service possible to all customers has created a climate of uncertainty and the TSC trying to be all things to all people. While the self-assessment did much to bring to the forefront the accomplishments of the last four

years, a greater emphasis has been placed on negative aspects of the operation. This has contributed to the feeling of uncertainty and confusion around the core mission of the TSC. Roles and responsibilities of the TSC staff members became blurred. Assessment respondents' comments reflect this:

"While it is recognized that the Agency does not look to the TSC for the final word on policy matters, we would recommend a greater role for the TSC in providing reasoned input into matters of policy and the rulemaking within FSIS. The TSC has people with invaluable practical knowledge and, as a result of the frequent contact with industry and field FSIS employees, the TSC has a better understanding of the issues. This should be very helpful to the Agency when developing new initiatives, regulations, etc." (Industry Representative)

"There needs to be an enforcement component in the TSC. It would enhance the coordination between inspection and enforcement, and it would ensure that both sides of the house are fully informed about what's going on." (FSIS senior executive)

"There needs to be closer collaboration between the TSC and OPHS." (FSIS senior executive)

The TSC needs to anticipate and be prepared to address emerging industry needs by being on the leading edge of scientific information. Comments both internal and external to the TSC raised this concern:

"We need the TSC to be a strong resource for validating scientific and technical data as we move into the 'next steps.' " (District Manager)

"There are numerous scientific and technological advances that occur rapidly. If the TSC is to remain recognized as the Agency's source of technical expertise, our staff must be provided improved access, exposure to, and time to absorb scientific information. This translates into planning and budgeting for TSC staff to attend key scientific conferences, participate on international commissions, or take courses specific to maintaining our technical expertise." (TSC staff member)

"We need a way to disseminate information to all inspection personnel. Develop some type of computer based information where up-to-date technical advice on a particular subject matter area is available." (District Manager)

One of the greatest challenges facing TSC is the balance of providing sound, technical advice with a customer service mind set. Many respondents consider the technical advice function of the TSC to be primary:

"We need to be a trusted source of information to all our customers." (TSC staff member)

"We can't afford to short change technical assistance. It's our backbone. Our reputation is built on it and the field and industry depend on us for it." (FSIS Branch Chief)

“We can’t be abrupt or condescending to our customers.” (TSC staff member)

In addition to the TSC’s relationship to headquarters and all of their customers, an important component of the TSC is the internal structure and environment. The TSC is currently structured in a way that closely matches the way the Agency was structured prior to the 1997 reorganization. This structure has been effective in facilitating a quick and workable start up for the TSC. It provided a sense of comfort and familiarity for customers, while serving their needs throughout PR/HACCP implementation. However, the current structure does not appear to be appropriate to facilitate the major functions identified by this reassessment activity.

At the time of this study, the TSC consisted of the Office of the Director, including a Director and a Deputy Director, and five divisions. The five divisions included Processing Operations (POS); Slaughter Operations (SOS); Program Review; Import/Export/IRM and Program Analysis; and Human Resource Development (HRDS).

Employees are uncertain of what the future holds, however, some things are certain. There is a need for clarity regarding roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships. First, everyone has to have a good understanding of a basic set of knowledge, in addition to specializing. Specialists need to broaden their perspective and be prepared to work across disciplines. They will need to constantly share information with a variety of people - not just others who share their specialty. They will work in teams with people who have specialties other than theirs. There still is a sense of command and control leadership and reluctance to look to the future direction of the industry and Agency. These challenges were expressed in several ways:

“When there are issues that need to be corrected, we need to be constructive, rather than being abusive or ignoring the problem.” (TSC staff member)

“We have accomplished a lot by getting the TSC up and running and facilitating the HACCP implementation. We are overlooking the contributions that have been made. It’s frustrating not to feel any sense of recognition or acknowledgement of the improvements and progress that we’ve made over the past three to four years. We get good feedback and compliments from customers about the changes they’ve seen in our approach and our helpful attitude, but we don’t get that kind of feedback generated internally from the TSC.” (TSC staff member)

"Communication is a discipline." (TSC Division Director)

“We need to let people know that their voice is heard.” (TSC staff member)

“The TSC’s future major role is to take what OPHS is doing and to translate it into useful information and to use it to support the field. We need applied epidemiologists at the TSC to do in plant assessments. We need to beef up the capacity to deal with the science and technology of HACCP and to carry that to the field and industry - specifically to support small plants. The future of the TSC is NOT translating the information that comes out of OPPDE. It is taking public health science and integrating it into the thought processes and decisions at the local level. We also need a data center that is staffed with data analysts,

including epidemiologist data analysts, to identify trends and make the information available to VMO's who will be freed to oversee the effectiveness of HACCP plans.” (Former FSIS Administrator)

Recommendations

The recommendations and their implementation take into consideration alignment with the FSIS Strategic Plan as well as with other ongoing FSIS plans and programs for mission accomplishment. They are not intended to duplicate existing activities but to identify ways in which collaboration can occur. Examples of such collaboration follow.

It is recognized that OPHS has the lead role with regard to scientific and public health concerns. However, as FSIS continues to utilize performance standards and to base regulations on scientific principles, the TSC plays an important role in serving as a resource to field personnel and industry to ensure compliance with regulations in a manner that appropriately incorporates the application of science. These recommendations include ways for the TSC to work cooperatively with OPHS to enhance the TSC's ability to fulfill that supporting role effectively.

An effort is currently being led by the FSIS Chief Information Officer to develop an FSIS corporate database. There is a cadre of analysts at the TSC. This has identified a significant gap in managing and utilizing data for decision making in the field. An opportunity exists for the TSC to play a key role in utilizing that corporate database to assist FO, headquarters, District Offices, and field personnel by including the TSC in the corporate database planning and development efforts.

The recommendations and solutions for implementation put forth in this report are based on the reassessment and additional validation data collected; analysis of that data; O.D. Systems twenty-one year history of consulting to organizations; and current organization development research and theory.

1. Clarify the role of TSC as part of the Agency's corporate group and articulate the connection between TSC, headquarters, field operations, and policy.

Solutions for Implementation

- A. Clarify the vision and future direction of the TSC, including strategies for achieving the vision, the employee's role in the process, and impact on the workforce.
- B. Develop a method to coordinate effectively with other program areas (OPPDE, OPHS).
- C. Develop strategies to enhance headquarters' awareness and utilization of the TSC.
- D. Establish an enforcement liaison capability within TSC.

2. Strengthen the TSC's scientific capability to ensure that it is an anticipatory, leading edge technical resource for the Agency and its customers.

Solutions for Implementation

- A. Develop systems and processes to ensure information and advice provided to customers is consistent and reliable.
- B. Translate the OPHS epidemiological/environmental assessments into useful information and processes for the field.
- C. Establish an information management function to include a data center staffed with data analysts, systems specialists, and epidemiologists, to generate information and systems that better aids field decision making.

3. Gain cultural acceptance of the TSC within the Agency by improving trust among customers and creating a welcoming and encouraging customer service culture that provides consistent, top notch service.

Solutions for Implementation

- Conduct continuing education activities for TSC staff on creating a customer focused environment.
 - Provide customers with a list of TSC staff and each person's subject matter expertise.
 - Hold weekly internal correlation meetings for everyone involved in providing technical assistance to ensure that accurate and consistent information is being provided.
 - Increase availability to assist the District Offices with special needs.
- 4. Streamline the internal organizational structure of TSC to accurately reflect the new FSIS culture; maximize positions and functions; establish effective communication mechanisms; strengthen leadership, and create employee development activities that recognize and value employees.**

Solutions for Implementation

- Submit proposed new organization structure and position descriptions for approval.
- Develop continuing education needs assessment and individual learning plans including a core curriculum and budget for attendance at scientific conferences and participation in international commissions and courses to ensure that the training and development needs of the TSC staff are met.
- Initiate rotational/developmental assignments from the field to the TSC, and from the TSC to headquarters.
- Provide structured mechanisms that encourage open communication among between employees and supervisors to build trust and enhance working relationships, to foster an environment of shared responsibility, and to ensure that existing mechanisms for disseminating information to employees about change are working.

- Provide supervisory personnel with training and education that enhances their communication and interaction with employees in a way that is constructive, encourages trust and productivity, and demonstrates role model behavior for employees.
- Encourage mentor relationships to assist employees in career development through both voluntary mentor relationships and a formal mentor program.
- Review policies and procedures regarding performance evaluation, promotions, award and recognition, and employee development for explicit ways to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all employees.

Suggestions for Innovation

The TSC is continuously improving its effectiveness and service. In order to ensure follow through from senior management to first-line employees, the TSC should be ahead of the curve and leading with innovation in all areas, including its internal culture, practices, and structure. Suggestions for innovation include creating and maintaining an appreciative environment; orienting the TSC's structure and processes toward open system thinking; and shifting from a data storage to knowledge management mind set.

Internal Culture and Practices

One aspect of innovation in the TSC is to reassess a negative view of service. The TSC might be challenged to shift its culture and focus to gaining insight into the factors that are working at the TSC rather than focusing on the things that are broken. Central to this proactive vantage point is a culture based on appreciative inquiry (AI).

AI is an innovative process of looking at what works in an organization rather than what is broken. This methodology for affecting and communicating large-scale change begins to move an organization up a success spiral rather than down a failure one. Through collaborative inquiry and a connection to success and accomplishments the focus is not on changing people, but rather building the kind of full potential organization in which they want to work. Spreading knowledge and initiating action becomes routine. As AI becomes a routine way of working, employees at all levels and in all agency functions identify best practices that the organization can build on in order to respond to new challenges. Organizations concentrate enormous resources to correcting problems. Yet when problem solving is used continuously over a long period of time, it leads to a negative culture that slips into a paralyzing sense of hopelessness (i.e., it won't work, we've tried that before). AI does not ignore problems. Instead, it approaches problems from the constructive side as challenges to mission accomplishment.

Because AI is a participatory process that builds on the best of the organization's past, it gets better results than seeking out problems. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Canadian Department of Defense, British Airways, and BP Corporation have used AI effectively. Examples of practices that can be implemented within the context of an organization-wide AI are cascaded training and dialogue sessions.

Cascaded training creates a structured learning environment where the people who are going to transfer the knowledge to the workplace learn together from their leaders. As opposed to third-party support departments' trainers, decision-makers train their own teams. Cascaded training begins with the organizational leader who trains his immediate subordinates, who then train their immediate subordinates, etc. As a result, transfer of the training to the workplace and systemic organizational change is enhanced because the same core messages and information uniformly cascades through the organization. Cascaded training is used at Lockheed-Martin.

Implementing structured dialogue sessions will create awareness, build capacity to think together, and create shared meaning at the TSC. More than just conversation, brainstorming or group debate, dialogue sets up an environment and ground rules that promote collaborative, collective thinking and reflective group learning. Dialogue in one-to-one interviews and in groups builds a shared understanding among individuals on critical, often divisive issues facing the organization. It supports practicing advocating and inquiring about perceptions, ideas, and experiences for supporting collaborative partnerships in organizations.

The outcomes of the dialogic process include creation of shared meaning that contributes to a collective understanding of issues among both managers and employees. Structured dialogue enhances individual growth and effectiveness through the processes of listening, reflective thinking, finding meaning, and building acceptance for differing perspectives. By increasing trust, cooperation, communication, and shared responsibility, organization members can identify and acknowledge critical communication incidents that have resulted in problematic work issues and interpersonal relations. This facilitates accomplishment of work group objectives, along with the larger organizational mission. This dialogic methodology helps to open communication channels, build trust, and foster cultures of collaboration and shared leadership. It has been utilized effectively at NASA, Ford Motor Company, Shell Oil, and Motorola.

Structure

This study identified four major functional areas of the TSC.

- Correlation
- Technical Assistance
- Information Management, Analysis, and Support
- Education

Restructuring the TSC in a way that aligns the structure with the current and anticipated demands will help improve the TSC's organization, communication, and management. Alignment with major functions will be more effective and more efficient than the current structure in meeting both internal and external needs for the foreseeable future.

The Correlation function would include Food Safety Systems Correlation activities as well as the auditing functions for states and foreign countries, and imports and exports.

The Technical Assistance function would include slaughter, residue, processing, and egg products.

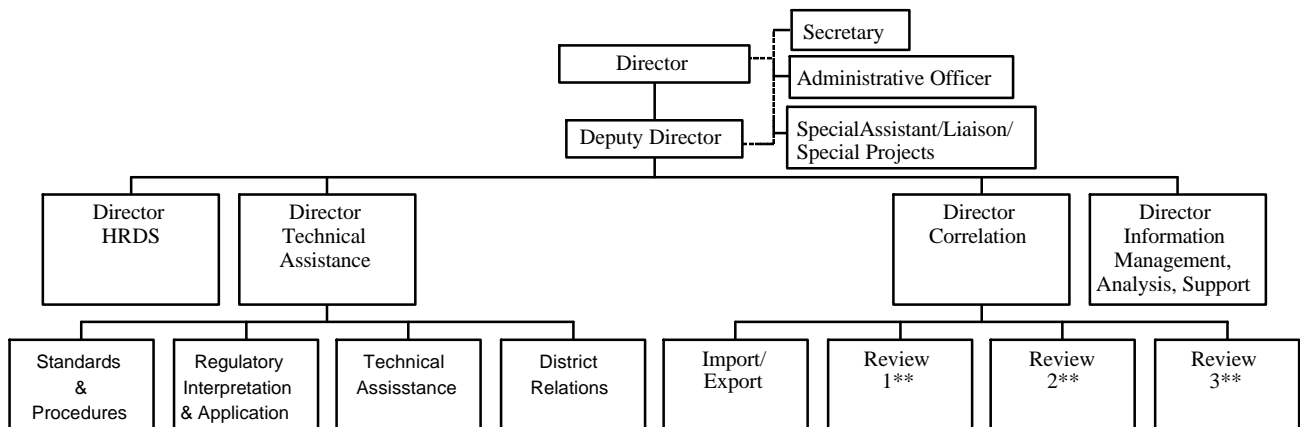
The Information Management, Analysis, and Support function would include data analysis and management, and systems maintenance.

The Special Assistant function would include management of new projects or emerging programs (e.g., HIMP, HACCP in eggs), and liaison functions. It would also include internal TSC training and education functions.

The Education function is the Human Resource Development Staff located in College Station, TX, and is being addressed in the TEC 2001 report.

On the next page is a suggested table of organization and description of the proposed structure. A number of options were considered for the TSC structure, including maintaining the existing five-division structure. The structure that follows was determined to have the best alignment with the functions that were identified by the reassessment. Each of the four main functional areas will have a Division Director. The support functions will report through the Deputy Director to the Director, Special Assistant, and Administrative Officer.

Proposed TSC Table of Organization



* Special projects coming to the TSC that do not fall naturally within one of the established functional groups would be coordinated by the person in this position, utilizing personnel from different, and perhaps all, groups within the TSC.

** Review 1 - International/State Review; Review 2- FSSC Plant Visits; Review 3 - FSSC Correlation Activities.

It is recommended that the TSC Director have a stronger presence at the national level to ensure that the TSC is utilized effectively by all program areas; to keep the staff in Omaha informed and updated on a regular basis of recent developments; and to interact with Agency management officials and officials of other government agencies.

The Director, Deputy Director, and Division Directors make up the TSC management team. At any given time, one may be asked to act for the other. They will coordinate efforts to ensure the successful accomplishment of the TSC mission.

The Director of Technical Assistance, the Director of Management Information, Analysis and Support, and the Director of Correlation may share staff resources on an as-needed basis for activities such as making presentations at industry meetings, In Depth Verification Reviews, and in-plant environmental assessments, etc.

The Director of HRDS may utilize staff resources from the Technical Assistance, Correlation, and Management Information, Analysis and Support Divisions to help design, develop, deliver, and/or evaluate training.

Technical Assistance Division

Functions of the Technical Assistance Division are to:

- Provide technical expertise, information, and advice to District Operations personnel, and to the industry, on the interpretation, application, implementation, and enforcement of regulations, policies, and systems. These may include, but are not limited to, items such as product adulteration, ante and post mortem dispositions, line speeds, slaughter and sanitary dressing procedures, and processing of meat, poultry, and egg products.
- Coordinate the implementation of various regulatory systems and procedures in slaughter and processing plants; analyze results; assess trends and performance; and provide feedback to OPPDE on refinements and adjustments needed in these procedures and systems.
- Provide analysis and technical support to district operations personnel regarding the nature, significance, and patterns of deficiencies related to enforcement actions.
- Analyze and recommend decisions to Agency managers regarding appeals of slaughter and processing regulatory decisions on meat, poultry, and egg products which are not resolved at the District level.
- Cooperate with OPHS in responding to public health emergencies or adverse regulatory trends/findings.
- Provide technical expertise to other Agency organizational units in the development of training and training materials for programs, procedures, and policies relating to the technical aspects of regulatory methodologies. Evaluate on-the-job training course objectives and

materials to assure accuracy and completeness, and work with other Agency units to modify materials as needed.

- Provide technical expertise and guidance to Districts and Circuits on process and product deviations and product dispositions on an as needed basis. Responds to outside inquiries on Agency slaughter and processing inspection policies and procedures.
- Coordinate the implementation of new regulatory systems, policies, and procedures.
- Serve as a feedback mechanism relating to changes and refinements in existing systems and procedures.
- Manage the National Residue Program at the field level, including monitoring and verification testing, enforcement actions, issuing of slaughter permits for animals used for Investigational and New Animal Drugs (INAD) and biologics.

Correlation Division

Functions of the Correlation Division are to:

- Participate with District Inspection Operations and OPPDE in designing operating systems, methods, guidelines, and procedures for reviewing foreign, state, and domestic program operations.
- Conduct systematic and special reviews to assess targeted program operations. Provide feedback on the results of these reviews to managers and supervisors, and to OPPDE.
- Conduct state reviews and foreign country audits to ensure compliance with “equal to” and equivalence requirements of the Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, and the Egg Products Inspection Act. When conducting foreign country audits, confers with OPPDE on issues involving equivalence requirements.
- Design operating systems, methods, guidelines, and procedures for reviewing program operation.
- Correlate with appropriate inspection program personnel throughout the country to assure that established policies, procedures, and systems for inspection and verification of slaughter and processing activities are being uniformly carried out.
- Recommend policy, procedure, or system changes, refinements, or adjustments as warranted.
- Develop correlation plans and materials designed to ensure uniformity of inspection and verification of slaughter and processing activities. Establish, coordinate, and conduct a recurring program of correlation sessions for district personnel.

- Conduct in-depth verification reviews in cases where establishments fail their second Salmonella sample set, and at any time for cause based on request by an FSIS management official, such as a District Manager.
- Provide technical expertise and guidance to district operations personnel and industry on the interpretation, enforcement, application, and implementation of regulations, policies, and systems as they pertain to importation/exportation of meat or poultry products to and from foreign countries. Recommend policy or system changes as appropriate.
- Interact and consult with foreign government officials visiting U.S. meat, poultry, and egg products establishments and help facilitate foreign country acceptance of U.S. inspection procedures and products.
- Participate in the development and implementation of regulations pertaining to inspection and certification of U.S. inspected meat, poultry, and egg products for export. Provide current information and clarification as needed by customers.

Information Management, Analysis, and Support Function

The functions of the Information Management, Analysis and Support Division are to:

- Conduct special studies to assess targeted program operations, evaluate results, and develop recommendations and reports.
- Assist TSC staff, headquarters managers, and District personnel in identifying trends and problems and recommending solutions to improve program operations.
- Assist TSC staff, headquarters managers, and District personnel in managing existing data analysis and management needs, identifying and addressing emerging data analysis and management needs, including developing, piloting and implementing databases and reporting systems.
- Analyze national data (e.g., PBIS, residue) for trends and problem areas; assess difficulties and report obstacles to the Deputy Administrator's office. Design special reports. Evaluate results and develop recommendations. Assist the District Office staff in analyzing and utilizing inspection program data.
- Provide feedback on the systems, methods, and procedures used in performing the various initiatives at the TSC. Analyze TSC databases for trends and problems encountered with the system.
- Provide support and training to the TSC staff for electronic communications systems.

Special Assistant/Liaison Function

The functions of the Special Assistant/Liaison are to:

- Coordinate with OPPDE and the Office of Field Operations headquarters to provide input on proposed policies and procedures that affect regulatory systems or procedures, training, or inspection operations. Consider the impact on current operations and recommend methods for implementing policies and procedures. May play a role in overseeing the implementation efforts.
- Coordinate with the Office of Field Operations at headquarters and the Internal Control Staff to develop responses to external reviews by OIG, GAO, and other external groups. Gather data from various sources. Develop responses in writing. Organize data to address questions and concerns. Coordinate follow-up when needed.
- Provide advice and input to OPPDE and Office of Field Operations managers on fine-tuning inspection policies and procedures. Evaluate information about the implementation of policies and procedures. Identify gaps, remaining questions, concerns, and special outstanding issues. May conduct interviews, review existing information, or design special studies when necessary.
- Take the lead to plan, coordinate, implement and evaluate technical conferences and meetings regarding regulatory policies and procedures. Work with various TSC staffs and headquarters staffs to prepare for the conference or meeting. Conduct liaison activities with external groups, such as industry representatives or representatives of other federal, state, or local agencies when needed.
- Develop or refine study methods to address specific problems related to district operations. Lead groups to identify problems, develop options, and recommend solutions.
- Prepare or consolidate reports of the results of studies. Gather information, analyze the significance and implications of information, and develop recommendations for improvement in regulatory strategies.
- Coordinate with the Office of Field Operations, OPPDE, and OPHS to identify training needs associated with implementing emerging initiatives, or new policies and procedures. Work cooperatively with the HRDS to ensure that the training needs are communicated effectively and that a training solution is developed in a manner that is timely, cost effective, and targeted to address the needs identified. Ensure that the appropriate technical expertise from the TSC staff is provided to assist HRDS in training development, delivery, and evaluation.

Implementation Plan

Beginning on next page is a table that outlines the solutions for implementation, a suggested timeframe; lead individuals responsible for implementation; required resources and follow-up activities.

Implementation Plan

RECOMMENDATION 1: Clarify the role of TSC as part of the Agency's corporate group and articulate the connection between TSC, headquarters, field operations, and policy.

SOLUTION	TIME FRAME	Lead	RESOURCES REQUIRED
A. Clarify the vision and future direction of the TSC, including strategies for achieving the vision, the employee's role in the process, and the impact on the workforce.	2 nd Q FY02	R. Hicks M. Mina	Align with FSIS Strategic P
B. Develop a method for coordinating effectively with other program areas to provide updates on small but significant adjustments in policy and procedures to field personnel in a timely manner.	2 nd Q FY02	P. Thompson P. Derfler	Develop mechanism model TAG to quickly communica field for significant issues. Utilize web site for announc
C. Develop strategies to enhance Headquarters' awareness and utilization of the TSC.	2 nd Q FY02	M. Mina P. Derfler R. Hicks Public Affairs	Develop and implement inte communication plan to crea awareness within FSIS of T Include TSC in key commit planning efforts.
D. Establish an enforcement liaison capability within TSC.	3 rd Q FY02	R. VanBlargan P. Thompson K. Mesmore	Define and establish positio interaction with inspection, enforcement, EED, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Strengthen the TSC’s scientific capability to ensure that it is an anticipatory, leading edge technical resource for the Agency and its customers.

SOLUTION	TIME FRAME	LEAD	RESOURCES REQUIRED
A. Develop systems and processes to ensure information and advice provided to customers is consistent and reliable.	3 rd Q FY02	District Manager D.Metz TSC Staff Member	Work group to define strateg methods, measures, and actio plan.
B. Translate the OPHS epidemiological/ environmental assessments into useful information and processes for the field.	3 rd Q FY02	P. Thompson E. Walker P. Derfler District Manager	Work group to identify strate and actions to strengthen relationship.
C. Establish an information management function to include a data center staffed with specialists such as data analysts, systems specialists, and epidemiologists to generate information and systems to better aid field decision making.	1 st Q FY03	P. Thompson J. Axtell District Manager OPPDE Rep. OPHS Rep. AISD Rep.	Align with ongoing FSIS knowledge management activities.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Gain cultural acceptance of the TSC within the Agency by improving trust among customers and creating a welcoming and encouraging customer service culture that provides consistent, top notch service.

SOLUTION	TIME FRAME	LEAD	RESOURCES REQUIRED
A. Conduct continuing education activities for TSC staff on topics that foster a customer focused environment	3 rd quarter of FY 2002	P. Thompson TSC Staff	Develop and implement measures of customer service and organizational effectiveness and plan activities.
B. Provide customers with a list of TSC staff and each person's subject matter expertise.	2 nd quarter of FY 2002	P. Thompson	TSC web site.
C. Hold weekly internal correlation meetings for everyone providing technical assistance to ensure accurate, consistent information for customers.	Immediately	P. Thompson TSC Div Directors	Designate a time for correlation and make that "reserved" time for correlation only.
D. Increase availability to assist the District Offices with special needs.	Action plan by 2 nd quarter of FY 2002	P. Thompson District Manager	Conduct a needs assessment, identify and develop strategies to address needs identified.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Streamline the internal organizational structure of TSC to accurately reflect the new FSIS culture; maximize positions and functions; establish effective communication mechanisms; strengthen leadership, and create employee development activities that recognize and value employees.

SOLUTION	TIME FRAME	LEAD	RESOURCES REQUIRED
A. Submit proposed new organization structure and position descriptions for approval.	2/1/02	P. Thompson	Approval
B. Develop continuing education needs assessment and individual learning plans including a core curriculum and budget for attendance at scientific conferences and participation in international commissions and courses to ensure that the training and development needs of the TSC staff are met	Start of 3 rd Q FY02	P. Thompson	Align with TEC 2000 recommendations.
C. Initiate rotational/developmental assignments from the field to the TSC, and from the TSC to headquarters.	End of 3 rd Q FY02	D. Metz District Manager B. Smith E. Walker P. Derfler	Budget for expenses at temporary duty station.
D. Provide structured mechanisms that encourage open communication among between employees and supervisors to build trust and enhance working relationships, to foster an environment of shared responsibility, and to ensure that existing mechanisms for disseminating information to employees about change are working.	Start of 2 nd Q FY02	P. Thompson TSC Supervisors TSC Staff	Establish monthly "TSC "All Staff" meetings. Institute structured dialogue sessions for employees Create supervisor-employee feedback program.
E. Provide supervisory personnel with training and education that enhances their communication and interaction with employees in a way that is constructive, encourages trust and productivity, and demonstrates role model behavior.	End of 3 rd Q FY02	P. Thompson	Continue to support attendance training sessions.
F. Encourage mentor relationships to assist employees in career development through both voluntary mentor relationships and a formal mentor program.	End of 3 rd Q FY02	P. Thompson M. Stevenson	Modify existing Agency mentoring program for TSC implementation.
G. Review policies and procedures regarding performance evaluation, promotions, award and recognition, and employee development for explicit ways to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all employees.	End of 2 nd Q FY02	P. Thompson	Strategies to address OPM organizational assessment.